

J O U R N E Y   O F   A   M I L I T A R Y   W I F E

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*Deployed*

Steps of Hope  
in Times of Uncertainty

# SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

(JOURNEY 1)



# God's Presence Helps Me Wait (Week 1)

## Waypoints 1–5

### Stop and get your bearings

What highlight from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

### Where shall we go?

What are words you would use to describe deployment? (Write the words that come to your mind on the sticky note provided. Use one note per word. When you are finished, add your notes to the chart.)

### Read the map

What does Genesis 50:24 tell you about what will happen in Exodus?

What do you learn about Moses from the book of Acts 7:20–22?

### Take time to explore

How has God used deployment to get your attention?

How can waiting for and in deployment cause you to doubt God's faithfulness?

What can you do to counteract doubt?

What does Exodus 5:22 say Moses did while he waited?

Join with two people and read the following verses. What do you discover about waiting on God? Write your findings on the *blessings in waiting* chart provided.

- Isaiah 40:31
- Psalm 27:13–14
- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Isaiah 30:18
- Romans 5:3–4
- Colossians 1:11

## Travelogue

Bethany described deployment as “the most challenging time of [her] life.” Even though she and her husband knew the deployment was coming she hoped it would get cancelled or postponed. She added, “When he really left, it somehow felt unreal. I watched the bus drive his unit away until I could not see it anymore. I did not want to go home. I sat in our car awhile. It was too early in the morning to call anyone. On my way home, I just cried and prayed.”

As Bethany adjusted to the reality of deployment, she decided to use the time waiting for her husband to return in a positive way. She read books that encouraged her to grow as an individual and a wife. She listened to uplifting sermons and music determined to focus on God and stay open to him through praise and prayer. She did not hesitate to seek support from others. She made a conscious decision not to feel sorry for herself and looked for ways to be a blessing to others.

In what ways have you been blessed by the way you have seen military wives wait during deployment?

## Pack your bags

What do you learn from Matthew 6:34 about waiting?

# God's Presence Helps Me Trust (Week 2)

## Waypoints 6–10

### Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

### Where shall we go?

Join with two other people and share a family tradition or ritual.

### Read the map

What ritual did God establish in Exodus 12:13?

How does Isaiah 31:5 portray the Lord?

*Just as birds hover over a nest, so the LORD who commands armies will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it; as he passes over he will rescue it. (NET)*

### Take time to explore

What are ways God has reminded you of his faithfulness during deployment?

### Travelogue

Read the following reports from military wives about the practice of ritual and tradition during deployment. Underline anything that stands out to you.

Holly, a veteran wife of multiple deployments, says, “Traditions provide continuity in some small part of our lives—a touchstone of sorts.”

Carlee tied a yellow ribbon on their banister for every month of deployment. At the end of each month, she and her young son ceremoniously removed a ribbon.

Alicia and her girls made a paper chain for two deployments. She said: “We did the number of weeks instead of days and every Sunday we ripped one off, used it to write something special that happened that week and mailed them to daddy. He reassembled the chain on the other end. The girls could see it behind him when we did a video chat and it made them so happy. The activity prompted conversation between them and their dad.”

Stacy shared: “We have a tradition of opening a pair of pajamas on Christmas Eve. When my husband was deployed, I still bought him a pair, wrapped them up and mailed them to him. On Christmas Eve we were able to video chat with him while he opened his pajamas and then we each opened ours. As much as it helped the kids feel closer to their dad, it really helped my husband feel like he was still part of Christmas and our family traditions.”

Laura used deployment to encourage gratitude and praise in her family. Her family’s faith ritual involved the creative use of a piggy bank. She told us: “We had a huge piggy bank that we named Petunia the Praise Pig. I cut small squares of paper and put them in a dish beside her. I told the girls to look for good things throughout the day. Whenever something “praiseworthy” occurred, we wrote it down and dropped it in Petunia. Over the course of the year, we collected a whole pile of praises to read over with my husband when he returned. I felt like in addition to having something to do with him when he got home, it helped us all focus on looking for the good in each day, rather than dwelling on the negative.”

A ritual that Carol and her husband observe is to hold hands when they pray. Carol reported, “While my husband was deployed I held my own hand to bridge the gap.” The practice brought comfort to her during her husband’s absence.

### **Pack your bags**

What is a *ritual of faith* you can establish during this time of deployment?

# God's Presence Helps Me Sing (Week 3)

## Waypoints 11–15

### Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

### Where shall we go?

Name that Tune!

### Read the map

What role did women play in Exodus 15?

### Take time to explore

What information do you find in these Scriptures about singing?

- Exodus 15:21
- Psalm 147:1, 7
- Psalm 149:1, 5
- Zephaniah 3:17
- Zechariah 2:10
- Ephesians 5:19
- Colossians 3:16
- James 5:13

Read the following paragraphs and underline anything that stands out to you:

God has woven song into the fabric of our DNA. Songs in Scripture are about what God has done for his people. They are songs filled with thanksgiving and wonder of God's might and power. Singing is not the means by which we enter the presence of God, but it is a way in which we can express the emotion that we feel. The very activity of singing helps us to engage with the emotional dimensions of the truths we are saying or the petitions we are praying. In other words, singing plays a critical role in helping us bridge the gap between the cognitive and affective aspects of our humanity in helping us process our emotional pain and so bring us to a point of praise.

## Travelogue

Military wife Kay struggled with celebration during her husband's deployment. She found it hard to be flexible with all the unknowns that accompanied her husband's absence. She reported:

"Deployment made me see that learning to be flexible is hard and not for the faint of heart. More often than not it is a three steps forward, two steps back process. I always want to be more enthusiastic about celebrating the one step forward, than I am complaining about the two steps back. In all honesty, I am much better at bemoaning my lack of progress or feeling stuck than I am in rejoicing in even an inch of advance. Oh, that I would learn the art of celebration, no matter how small."

What advice would you offer Kay about learning the art of celebration in the midst of deployment?

## Pack your bags

Take a moment to list the things you have grumbled about this week.

Take a moment to list something you can celebrate.

# God's Presence Helps Me Rest (Week 4)

## Waypoints 16–20

### Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

### Where shall we go?

What are some easy recipes or meal ideas you have used to help make meals easier during your husband's absence? Write your ideas on the cards provided.

### Read the map

Provisions:

Pattern:

### Take time to explore

Read the following passages. How do they speak to the issue of resting in God's provision?

- Matthew 6:25–34
- Habakkuk 3:17–19
- Philippians 4:10–20

What directive is given in Philippians 2:14?

What part does lack of rest play in a tendency to grumble?

What is the antidote to grumbling?

What part does friendship and accepting help from others play in the way you approach deployment?

What keeps you from accepting help? What keeps you from asking for help?



“When you give your soul rest, you open it to the peace Jesus intends for you.”

—John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping*

### Travelogue

Claire and her family experienced a yearlong deployment during their first military assignment. Still adjusting to the military lifestyle Claire had to quickly adjust to her husband's absence. She worked hard to get to the point where she could say, “I was reminded that my role is to support my husband, but that a season of deployment (separation) is unique in that the energy I usually expend in doing for him can now take on a greater focus for depending my relationship with The Lord; cultivating that relationship. I now have (in some ways) a little extra ‘me time’ and can find ways for more self-reflection and self-improvement. This time is often hard-fought to find when ‘life as usual’ is going on. So, therefore, enjoy it, embrace it, make the most of it.”

What do you think about Claire's story?

### Pack your bags

What is a provision from God during this deployment that reminds you of his presence?

# God's Presence Helps Me Learn (Week 5)

## Waypoints 21–25

### Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

### Where shall we go?

Create a “family rules” poster.

### Read the map

Read this statement and share your thoughts:

The Ten Commandments is more than just a list of dos and don'ts. More importantly, they define a relationship.

Join with two other people and read Exodus 20:1–17. List what you see in these Scriptures as important to God.

### Take time to explore

What do you learn about the character of God from Exodus 34:6?

What are you learning about the character of God during this deployment?

How have you made yourself open and available to learn things about God during this time?

## Travelogue

It was during a deployment that Marie sought out a Bible study with some other women in her husband's unit. In her own words:

Reflecting back on four deployments, I can clearly see how God drew me closer to him during those times. This happened mostly through studying the Bible with other military wives. There, I found a safe place to explore God for who he is. God used his word and the relationships I developed in those studies to prune and grow me in my faith.

What would keep a deployed spouse from experiencing what Marie has experienced?

## Pack your bags

Join with two other people and come up with your own Ten Commandments of Deployment.

# God's Presence Helps Me Finish (Week 6)

## Waypoints 26–30

### Stop and get your bearings

What highlights from the readings of the past week would you like to share with the group?

### Where shall we go?

Share with one other person something you started but never finished.

### Read the map

Describe the scene in Exodus 40:33–38.

What do you learn about God's plan in Exodus 29:43–46?

### Take time to explore

What excuses do you give not to build good things into your life?

Moses and the Israelites had more miles to go, but the completion of the tabernacle was a milestone for the journey. Why?

What do John 1:14 and 1 Corinthians 6:19 tell you about God's presence?

What do the following Scriptures tell you about finishing what God has started in you?

- Philippians 1:6
- 2 Timothy 4:6–8

## Travelogue

During her husband's deployment, Nellie started a business, Christina enrolled in college, and Tracy traveled Space-A to Europe with her home schooled kids for the education of a lifetime. Brenda wrote a book. Mary started a workout program and lost over fifty pounds. Jennifer began a prayer group with other deployed spouses. Celeste designed scrapbooks to catalog her family history. Sara pioneered a ministry that reaches out to other military wives. If you look closely at the things these women started and finished, it was not all about them. Their action blessed others as well.

There are days when you just want to finish a sentence, let alone accomplish something that will bless others.

## Pack your bags

What is something you have started (or would like to start) during deployment that you are committed to finishing?